



# COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

## DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

### For Immediate Release

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### **Refugee Resettlement on the Rise in Virginia**

***--Resettlement spreading beyond Northern Virginia--***

**Richmond** – More than 1,800 refugees began making new lives for themselves in Virginia last year, a 60 percent increase from the previous year, reports the Virginia Department of Social Service Office of Newcomer Services (ONS). ONS is responsible for coordinating Virginia's refugee program.

"Last year was the first year since the 9/11 terrorist attacks that we've seen an increase in arrivals in the United States refugee program," said ONS Program Manager Kathy C. Cooper.

Refugees are men, women and children from all parts of the world who are forced to flee their homelands because of wars and gross human rights violations. They have faced persecution in their homelands for their race, religion and/or political opinion.

ONS contracts with agencies to resettle refugees in programs located in Northern Virginia, Harrisonburg, Charlottesville, Roanoke, Richmond, Fredericksburg and Tidewater.

Here are some highlights of Virginia's 2004 refugee numbers:

- 1,745 refugees were resettled in federal fiscal year 2004; up from 1,132 in 2003
- The 2004 figure includes 212 asylees, who arrived independent of the official refugee program
- 187 Cuban-Haitian entrants arrived in 2004, mostly in Tidewater
- 915 of the refugees were from Africa, the rest came from East and South Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Middle East, Europe and the former Soviet Republics

Overall, the United States welcomed a total of 52,868 new refugees in 2004.

"Virginia has a long history of successful resettlement and, as a result, many diverse refugee communities have sprung up throughout the state," said Cooper. "An ultimate goal for all refugees is eventual American citizenship."

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Social service and health departments, schools and many volunteers provide employment and support services, including English language training to help these new Americans make a new life here and contribute to Virginia's communities and culture.

"Virginia's refugee program stresses early self-sufficiency and personal responsibility," explained Cooper. "The service providers develop a comprehensive resettlement plan for each refugee and family."

To learn more about refugee resettlement in Virginia visit <http://www.dss.state.va.us/family/ons>.

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